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KULDEEP, ASHWIN SUMMIT PEAK

Kuldeep Yadav's five-wicket haul and R Ashwin's four helped hosts India skittle out England for 218 runs on Day One at Dharamsala on Thursday. This is fourth five-wicket haul for Kuldeep. Playing his 100th Test, Ashwin cleaned up the tail while Ravindra Jadeja took one. Fifties by openers Rohit Sharma and Yashasvi Jaiswal took India to 135 for one | PTI | P19

Cabinet clears ₹10K cr to boost AI ecosystem

Centre hikes DA, DR to 50% of basic pay; extends ₹300 LPG subsidy through FY25

MONIKA YADAV @ New Delhi

CLOSE on the heels of the Centre's plan to regulate AI tools deployed in India by big tech companies, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs on Thursday approved an outlay of ₹10,371.92 crore for the national-level IndiaAI Mission to boost the artificial intelligence ecosystem in the country.

The IndiaAI Mission encompasses various components. It includes the IndiaAI Compute Capacity to build a scalable AI computing ecosystem with 10,000 or more graphics processing units through public private partnership for startups and researchers. Next, the IndiaAI Innovation Centre will focus on developing indigenous large multimodal models and foundational models in critical sectors. The IndiaAI Datasets Platform will streamline access to quality non-personal datasets and the IndiaAI Startup Financing pillar will support deep-tech AI startups and provide them access to funding to enable futuristic AI projects.

The Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi also made a few populist announcements ahead of the 2024 general elections, including the release of additional instalment of Dearness Allowance (DA) to 49.18 lakh Central government employees and Dearness Relief (DR) to 67.95 lakh pensioners with effect from January 1, 2024. This represents an increase of 4% over the existing rate of 46% for basic pay/pension to compensate against price rise. This will set the exchequer back by ₹12,868 crore per annum. "This increase is based on the recommendations of the 7th Central Pay Commission," the government said.

The Cabinet also gave nod to the continuation of targeted subsidy of ₹ 300 per 14.2 kg LPG cylinder (and proportionately pro-rated for 5 kg cylinder) for up to 12 refills per year for 10.27 crore beneficiaries under the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana during FY25. The total expenditure will be ₹12,000 crore for FY25. The subsidy is credited directly to bank accounts of the eligible beneficiaries.

The Centre also cleared the commerce ministry's proposal for ₹10,037 crore outlay for the UNNATI industrialisation scheme aimed at developing the northeastern states.

MODI SAYS NEW J&K BREATHING FREELY NOW; CONG UNVEILS YOUTH OUTREACH

PM guarantees efforts to win more J&K hearts

FAYAZ WANI @ Srinagar

Prime Minister Narendra Modi at a rally in Srinagar | PTI

IN his first visit to Kashmir after the reading down of Article 370 in 2019, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said J&K is the head (*mastak*) of India, which is breathing freely after the removal of its special powers.

"I am happy and grateful for your love today. Modi will not leave any stone unturned to return this love and affection," the PM said.

In his outreach, he said, "I am doing this hard work to win your hearts. I believe I am on the right path and will continue my efforts to win more hearts. This is Modi's guarantee," he said.

J&K, Modi said, is not just a region but is the head of the country. "And a head held high is a symbol of development and respect."

He said this is the new (*naya*) J&K the country was waiting for since decades. It has the courage to overcome all challenges, he added.

On the PM's visit, normal life remained unaffected. There was no shutdown as no separatist or militant group had issued such a call.

Recalling the surge in foreign tourist arrivals in the valley, he said J&K is attracting more and more celebrities and international guests. "People should also come to J&K and host their weddings here," he suggested. The PM, however, did not touch upon the restoration of statehood and assembly polls in J&K.

Rahul guarantees to fill 30L govt vacancies

RAJESH ASNANI @ Jaipur

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi at a public meeting in Banswara | PTI

CONGRESS leader Rahul Gandhi on Thursday offered a slew of guarantees to the youth, including filling up 30 lakh government vacancies if voted to power at the Centre. Calling it *Bharti bharosa* (assurance on filling up vacancies), he said it would be done within specified timeframes.

Rahul was speaking at a rally during his Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra in Banswara.

"In addition, the Congress commits to offering at least one-year apprenticeship to every diploma holder and graduate in both government and private sectors within their first year of graduation, with a stipend of approximately ₹1 lakh per annum," he said. Rahul labeled this assurance as *Pehli naukri pakki* (first job guarantee) and said the promise would be made legally binding akin to the MNREGA scheme.

In all, he offered five guarantees to the youth — recruitment, trust, confirmed first job, freedom from paper leaks and youth empowerment. The party packaged it as *Yuva Nyay* (justice to youth).

As for paper leaks, he said, "we propose a legislative solution. This law will involve revamping examination protocols, giving precedence to government agencies over private entities. Should a leak occur despite these precautions, stringent legal measures will be implemented."

HC allows board exams for classes 5, 8, 9

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Bengaluru

THE division bench of Karnataka High Court on Thursday gave a green signal to the state government to conduct the board examinations for the students of Classes 5, 8 and 9 scheduled to be held from March 11. Exams for class 11 had already been completed on February 28.

With this, 28 lakh students from 45,000 schools across the state will be taking examinations from March 11 for which the times-tables were out in December itself.

A division bench of Justices K Somashekar and Rajesh Rai K passed the interim order by staying the judgment delivered by the single judge on March 6, until further orders, without expressing any opinion on the merits of the case.

The single judge had quashed the notifications dated October 6 and 9, 2023 issued by the state government to hold board examinations for the summative assessment of students of Classes 5, 8, 9 and 11 in schools affiliated to the Karnataka School Examination and Assessment Board. P5

EXPRESS READ

Govt terms bike taxis illegal, bans them

Bengaluru: The state government has banned all bike taxis stating that use of non-transport vehicles such as bikes as taxis and private apps for their operation is against the Motor Vehicles Act | P2

Blast accused spotted travelling to Bhatkal

Ballari: An NIA team landed in Ballari on Thursday after the accused in The Rameshwaram Cafe blast case was spotted travelling to Bhatkal from Ballari bus stand on Wednesday | P4

EXPRESS INTAKE

State govt acts, caps tanker water prices | P2

Minor girl gangraped in Tumakuru, 3 arrested | P3

BIFFes COMES TO A CLOSE

Awards were distributed in Kannada, Indian and Asian cinema categories. Director Amar L's *Nirvana* bagged the First Best Kannada Cinema award. Director MS Sathyu honoured with Lifetime Achievement Award | P2

WITH THIS ISSUE
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